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SUBJECT: AFCENT COMMANDER DISCUSSES AIR AND MISSILE DEFENSE
WITH SAUDI AIR DEFENSE AND NAVY COMMANDERS

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[1](#)B. RIYADH 33

Classified By: A/DCM Lisa M. Carle for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

[1](#)1. (S) SUMMARY. In January 5 meetings with Royal Saudi Air Defense Forces (RSADF) Commander LTG Abdulaziz Mohamed Al-Hussein and Royal Saudi Naval Force (RSNF) Commander VADM Fahd bin Abdullah bin Mohammed Al-Saud, U.S. Air Forces Central (AFCENT) Commander Lt Gen Mike Hostage broached CENTCOM's desire to pursue Regional Integrated Air and Missile Defense (RIAMD) together with all the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. Both service chiefs were receptive to partnering and exercising under RIAMD, and to learning more about it. Lt Gen Hostage invited LTG Hussein to visit his operations center in Qatar to enhance interoperability. Both Hussein and Fahd described the ongoing battle against Houthi infiltrators on the Saudi border, with both lamenting that U.S. delays in releasing needed weapons technologies were hindering the Saudi effort to defend its territory. (Lt Gen Hostage's meeting with RSADF Commander Prince Faisal reported septel.) END SUMMARY.

RELEASABILITY PROBLEMS AND THE HOUTHI FIGHT

[1](#)2. (S) RSADF Commander LTG Hussein and U.S. Air Forces Central (AFCENT) Commander Lt Gen Mike Hostage and U.S. Military Training Mission (USMTM) Chief Maj Gen Paul Van Sickle discussed Yemen, agreeing on the need for President Saleh to deal effectively with the Houthi rebellion and establish stability. Asked how the Saudi military's efforts were progressing to expel the Houthis from the Saudi border, LTG Hussein replied that the fight would be going better if the Saudi defense forces "could get the stuff we need on time" from the U.S. He complained in particular about the U.S. delay or inability to release encrypted cell phones to the KSA military. He noted that such cell phones were available on the open market, but the Saudi government still preferred to turn to the U.S. for equipment. (Comment) phones are not available for sale in KSA) the company (General Dynamics) needs an export license. RSADF wrote an official LOR that was received 3 January and turned over to the Embassy with a country team assessment so that DOS embassy can grant an export license. The RSADF commander was under the impression that this could be done with a phone call) these are encrypted SIPR/NIPR/CAC enabled phones that may not be releasable and the RSADF is looking for this to be a direct commercial sale.) "There are good guys" in Washington, LTG Hussein said, but they don't have the full picture of the battleground from so far away, he lamented.

13. (S) LTG Hussein expressed confidence that his Air Defense Forces could "shoot down anything that flies over" Saudi airspace. (NOTE: This confidence stems from recent Patriot as a Target (PAAT) LFX where they shot down 7/9 targets.) Lt Gen Hostage used this opening to explain his role as the support commander in CENTCOM for Regional Integrated Air and Missile Defense (RIAMD), explaining that his network of satellites, radars, and Aegis cruisers could detect missile launches anywhere in the AOR as they left the ground, such as a Shahab-3 from Iran. This would enable the U.S. to give GCC countries earlier notification than they could detect themselves with only their Patriot batteries, and he urged Hussein to work together with him as he developed bilateral networks with GCC countries to share such information. LTG Hussein said the RSADF would benefit from sharing such information and capabilities and would like to exercise such scenarios. Acknowledging that the RSADF was the most capable air defense force in the region, Lt Gen Hostage invited him to visit his Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC) in Qatar to see for himself whether there would be cause to partner with the U.S. in RIAMD. LTG Hussein welcomed exchange visits, stating that he would like to expand the relationship with AFCENT, and it would be of interest to him "to see how things fit together" in the CAOC. Lt Gen Hostage related that he expected to see a Theater High Altitude Air Defense (THAAD) system deployed to the AOR within the next year, along with an AN/TPY-2 radar soon.

SHARING CRITICAL ASSET LISTS

14. (S) Noting that he had his own Critical Assets List (CAL) of key Saudi critical infrastructure sites, Lt Gen Hostage said it would be worthwhile to compare lists with the RSADF. LTG Hussein agreed, commenting that there could never be enough defense of critical infrastructure. (NOTE: Lt Gen Hostage and the U.S. Office of Program Management/Facilities Security Forces (OPM/FSF) Chief BG Catalanotti also agreed to share their lists.) Lt Gen Hostage pointed out that this was another reason to become RIAMD partners. Deconflicting who would shoot at which incoming missiles or aircraft was another important element of RIAMD cooperation. "The more an adversary sees that we are difficult to attack, the less likely he will be to attack," Hostage concluded.

IRANIAN MISSILES AND PROPAGANDA

15. (S) Lt Gen Hostage asked for LTG Hussein's views of Iran's Shahab-2 and -3 missiles. By showing their missiles in public, Hussein responded, the Iranians mixed their weaponry with propaganda. He said he had seen their Hawk air defense missiles, but he wasn't sure all the Iranian systems actually worked. Still, he stated, their missile systems have to be taken seriously, and "we are very concerned," which was why Shared Early Warning (SEW) was so important. Lt Gen Hostage noted that that was what he could offer with his satellites. In addition, Maj Gen Van Sickle related that a U.S. team would be in place by the end of January to finish setting up Saudi Arabia's new SEW system. LTG Hussein remarked that the RSADF had waited too long for the SEW system.

16. (S) Maj Gen Van Sickle mentioned that Missile Defense Agency (MDA) head Lt Gen O'Reilly would visit KSA in February and Van Sickle hoped that Gen O'Reilly could make a joint presentation to MODA (Ministry of Defense and Aviation) commanders. Lt Gen Hostage said he worked closely with MDA, which had provided him a linked architecture for a recent integrated missile defense exercise between the CAOC, U.S. Patriot batteries and Aegis cruisers. As the U.S. side became well integrated, the next step was to regionalize integrated air and missile defense with GCC partners, he elaborated. LTG Hussein said a Command Post exercise was

needed to have all the partners see the same picture. Lt Gen Hostage explained that that was indeed his goal: to exercise and synchronize efforts. He said a Missile Defense Center of Excellence (COE) was being established in the region for training purposes that would enable countries to train without having to disrupt their operating national defense systems. He hoped that Saudi Arabia would join the COE once it was opened. LTG Hussein said he hoped so, too, commenting that Patriots systems without early warning were pointless. Lt Gen Hostage observed that the role of Link-16 communications architecture was to knit the Patriots as well as other systems with each other. He said the U.S. Air Force, Navy and Army were learning to work with each other on missile defense, to which LTG Hussein responded that the Saudi military liked to work together with its U.S. counterparts, and Lt Gen Hostage concurred. He invited LTG Hussein to observe a U.S. MD exercise in late March.

RSNF TAKE ON RIAMD COOPERATION) AND RELEASABILITY

17. (S) In a subsequent meeting with RSNF Commander VADM Fahd, Lt Gen Hostage described again his goals for RIAMD, noting he could link in RSNF capabilities for littoral defense as all regional systems began to be tied together. VADM Fahd replied that he would be willing to cooperate with the U.S. in any capacity in order to help the RSADF. He also pointed to requests from the U.S. Navy for similar cooperation. Lt Gen Hostage explained that he worked very closely with USNAVCENT (Naval Forces Central), and both AFCENT and NAVCENT could work with the RSNF on RIAMD, pointing out that U.S. capabilities could help protect Saudi critical assets. But there would be a need to train together against ballistic missile, cruise missile and aircraft threats, and he outlined the goals of the COE.

18. (S) VADM Fahd said all the RSNF had was CIWS (close-in weapons system) point defense for its ships. He had been trying to explain to higher authorities the need for better

naval air defense assets) "if we get the right stuff, and not less capable systems," he added, obliquely referring to U.S. unwillingness to release its most capable weapons systems to KSA. The Admiral stated that the two sides would have to examine whether Saudi systems would be able to contribute, "so that if your ships are away, ours can cover the area." He said he had considered the two U.S. ships in competition for a new RSNF contract, and he did not think that either would meet 100% of the RSNF's requirements without significant design changes. He said the RSNF worked closely with the RSADF and the U.S. Navy. The key issue, he stressed, was to have SM-3 (Standard Missile 3) MD systems "up there looking."

19. (C) VADM Fahd posited that the RSAF (Royal Saudi Air Force) got whatever it wanted, unlike the RSNF. He suggested that U.S. interlocutors should press Prince Khalid bin Sultan, MODA Assistant Minister for Military Affairs, and others up to King Abdullah about the RSNF's need for better weapons systems to be able to defend itself. He half-joked that the RSNF would like to be better at air defense than the RSADF.

FAHD: IRANIANS INVOLVED WITH HOUTHIS

110. (C) Lt Gen Hostage asked for VADM Fahd's take on how the fight against the Houthi infiltrators was progressing. Fahd said the Houthis got the message that they were not welcome in the Kingdom and that the KSA had the right to defend itself. He said the RSAF in particular was doing a good job and its efforts needed to be supported (by the U.S.). He was sure "the Houthis are not doing what they are doing because they want to." Rather, they were working according to "someone else's" agenda. "This is not speculation, but fact," VADM Fahd asserted, pointing out that when one looked at the Iranian official spokesman's and Foreign Minister's comments, one could see evidence of Iran's involvement. He

believed that Iran was trying to build a Hezbollah-like terrorist group in the Houthi area of Yemen. He thought it would be wiser to bring development to that region than to leave it undeveloped and under the influence of outside actors.

¶11. (C) VADM Fahd stated that President Saleh should be listening to the opposition leaders in the South, and he should be doing more to develop infrastructure in his country, but he needed help. Fahd said he didn't want Yemen to become a failed state like Somalia, and he tied Al Qaeda in Yemen to Al Qaeda in Somalia, commenting that all the poor tribesmen in both countries managed to carry sophisticated weapons -- "who is the outside actor?"

COUNTER-PIRACY EFFORTS NOT EFFECTIVE

¶12. (C) Piracy was another problem that should have been solved early on, VADM Fahd remarked. "From Somalia to Afghanistan, it is not a healthy situation for us for Muslims to act this way," he observed. "There has to be a solution."

Lt Gen Hostage said participation in the counter-piracy Combined Task Force was a good step, but Fahd pointed out that 10 ships had been pirated lately, and no one had stopped the pirates. "If a thief knows he can enter your house and take what he wants, why wouldn't he?" VADM Fahd exclaimed. "Why have a navy there) it's like a cop not stopping a drug dealer. What good is it?" he wondered. VADM Fahd concluded that the military and the civilian side formed two hands, and "you can't work one-handed," calling for more aid to the Somali people.

¶13. (S) COMMENT: Both LTG Hussein and VADM Fahd welcomed Lt Gen Hostage's invitation to partner in RIAMD, although Fahd was a little more cautious. He seemed taken aback at first to be meeting with a U.S. Air Force counterpart, but he quickly warmed to the discussion. As VADM Fahd observed, RSNF has no significant air or missile defense capability until acquisition of Saudi Naval Expansion Program II (SNEP II)/Eastern Fleet Modernization Program (EFMP), at which time RSNF is proposed to acquire the Surface Combatant Ship (SCS) equipped with the AEGIS SPY-1F combat system. The SM-2 Block IIIA missile is currently approved for sale to Saudi Arabia, which does not have an anti-ballistic missile capability. However, as noted above VADM Fahd is interested in acquiring

SM-3, which does have an anti-ballistic missile capability. SNEP II/EFMP is awaiting approval from King Abdullah. AFCENT will press RSADF Commander Hussein) and RSAF Commander Prince Faisal) to visit the CAOC at the earliest opportunity to see firsthand the opportunities that could be on offer in partnering in regional integrated air and missile defense.

SMITH